

CPA Project Application Form

[CPC Use Only: Date Received 1/10/24 By: KBury
Assigned CPC #2025- 08

If possible, use word processor to fill out form. Please answer all questions, use "N/A" if not applicable.

1. a.) Applicant Name and Organization: Last Theall First Aubrey
Organization(s) (if appropriate) Groton Historical Commission

b.) Regional Project: Yes ? or No? ? If Yes, Town/Organization:
Not a regional project

2. Submission Date: 11/11/2023

3. Applicant Address: St. 197 Maple Avenue
City/ State: Groton, MA ZIP: 01450

4. Ph. # 617-314-5755 Email: aubreytheall@hotmail.com

5. CPA Purpose. Check all that apply:
Community Housing ☐ (Affordable Housing ☐ Historic Preservation* ☒ Open Space ☐
Recreation ☐

* As per MA General Law Chapter 44B, proposed historic projects that are not on the structures listed on the state's registry of historic places require a determination by the Groton Historic Commission that the proposed project is of historic significance.

6. Town Committee or boards participating: Groton Historical Commission

7. Project Location/Address: Martins Pond Rd (Gibbet Hill Farm)

8. Project Name: Bancroft Castle Preservation Study

9. Additional Responsible Parties (If applicable):

Role (specify)	Name	Address	Ph. (w) (cell)	Email
Property/Site Owner				
Project Manager				
Lead Architect				
Project Contractor				
Project Consultants	Pending completion of RFP			
Other:				
Other				

10. As appropriate, indicate if proposal requires P&S agreement ☐ Deed ☐
Option agreement ☐ Other-describe: N/A

11. a.) Assessor info. (map/ block/ lot id.(s)): 116/3/1// b.) Tax classification type: 1320

12. Permits required: Zoning: ? Historic Preservation: ? Other: None for a study

13. Historic Commission Approval signoff (when required): Project is sponsored by HistComm Date: ?

14 a.) Project cost \$ ~\$15,000 : Estimate ☒ Professional quote ☐ b.) Requested from CPC:
~\$15,000 c.) Committed from other source: \$ N/A If applicable: annual anticipated total
income: \$ N/A Annual anticipated total expense: \$ N/A Anticipated net income
(loss): \$ N/A Name of Estimator name/company: Estimate is approximate and pending RFP responses due 1/31/24.

15. CCP Objectives - use codes from **Section 5 of Community Preservation Plan** to indicate all that apply: 5.1.2

16. Project Timelines: Proposed Start Date: 7/1/24 Projected Complete Date: 9/30/24

17. Estimated Delivery Date of Completion Report to CPC: 10/15/24

18. Project description and explanation (attach additional sheets as needed): _____

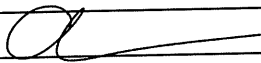
The Groton Historical Commission proposes to commission a study by a qualified masonry preservation firm as to the structural integrity of the (masonry) remains of the Bancroft Castle atop Gibbet Hill. This study would additionally outline a strategy to preserve these remains to the maximum extent practically and economically possible and include professional estimates as to the cost to execute that preservation plan. Please see the attached narrative project summary for additional detail.

19. Feasibility: No feasibility concerns are known to exist.

20. List of attachments: Narrative project summary (attached).
Letters of support from the Webber family (property owner), Groton Conservation Commission (preservation restriction holder) and the Groton History Center

21. Additional Information: It is anticipated that this study would precede a subsequent fundraising effort (which could include an application for additional CPA funding) for the actual work of preserving the castle remains as per the plan outlined in the proposed study.

22. Management Plan: Aubrey Theall and Joshua Vollmar of the Groton Historical Commission would be charged with administering the project and working with the selected vendor to complete the proposed study.

23. Applicant Signature:  Date: 1/10/2024
Co Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____
Co Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

CPA SUMMARY PROJECT FORM –

Assigned CPC #2024- 08]

Introduction: 5

The "castle" on Gibbet Hill, one of Groton's most recognizable landmarks, was created starting in 1904 for Gen. William Amos Bancroft, a Groton native who became president of the Boston Elevated Railway in 1899. It was intended to be the stables and carriage house for his Shawfieldmont estate, an adjunct to the mansion planned for the crest of the hill but never built. Despite its old-world appearance, the castle contained plumbing and electricity, and was built with modern formed concrete. In 1906, Bancroft had parts of the interior finished off to be used as a seasonal residence for his family.

Bancroft sold the property in 1912, and two years later, the castle found a new use as a long-term recovery hospital run by Dr. Harold W. Ayres, which focused on tuberculosis patients, and after a government contract in 1920, on World War I veterans. The hospital closed in 1928, and the next year, the property was rented to the elite Groton Hunt Club for use as their clubhouse. However, on the evening of July 4, 1930, trespassers on the property set off firecrackers, catching the castle on fire, and the wood portion of the structure was a total loss.

In 2000, Groton residents Steve and Nancy Webber purchased the castle along with Gibbet Hill to preserve it from development. In 2002, a conservation restriction and easement were placed on the property, which allowed the castle to be open to the public.

Although minimal restoration was made to the ruins at the time they became accessible to the public, ongoing deterioration of the structure has continued for more than 93 years since the fire in 1930. As the site has become one of the most visited tourist attractions in North Central Massachusetts, the danger of both the site being further damaged and of someone being injured continues to grow. The dangers were most recently highlighted in the winter of 2022-2023, when a tree fell on and destabilized the northeast corner of the structure, which has been cordoned off for public safety.

Without intervention the remains will continue to deteriorate and eventually their significant features will be lost.

Proposal:

The Groton Historical Commission ("GHC"), partnering with Webber Family (property owner) and the entities that hold the conservation restrictions on the property (the Groton Conservation Commission and Massachusetts DEP) propose to commission a professional study by a qualified masonry conservation firm to assess the condition of and determine what reasonably and economically can be done to preserve the remaining structure. The Historical Commission would also utilize this process as an opportunity to have the Castle inventoried in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's MACRIS system. The Webber Family and Groton

Conservation Commission have endorsed this concept. As of the time of the writing of this summary the Historical Commission has reached out to MA DEP and is working on securing their endorsement.

Costs:

GHC is has issued a request for proposals (in accordance with CPC policy) from qualified masonry preservation firms to assess the condition of the remaining structure and develop a conservation plan. An initial RFP was issued in November of 2023, however, no bids were received. A wider RFP including a number of additional firms was issued on 1/8/24. Bids are due in on 1/31, ahead of the 2/22 deadline for final applications. It is roughly estimated that the order of magnitude for this project is \$15,000.

Management Plan:

GHC members Aubrey Theall (Chair) and Joshua Vollmar would be responsible for organizing the request for proposals, selecting the most appropriate firm and providing project oversight. Should this project be approved at the Spring 2024 Town Meeting we would target completion by September 30, 2024.

Previous CPA funded projects:

The Groton Historical Commission has successfully completed numerous CPA funded projects, a listing of which will be provided in the full application should the project reach this stage.

Conformance to CPA allowable spending chart:

"Section 2 of the CPA legislation defines historic resources, preservation, and rehabilitation. Under CPA, an historic resource is defined as a building, structure, vessel, real property, document or artifact that is either:

- listed on the State Register of Historic Places; or
- determined by the local Historic Commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of the city or town.

CPA funds may be spent on the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources."

Prior to submitting a full application the Groton Historical Commission would make a formal determination (by vote) as to the significance of the Bancroft Castle as to its historical, archeological and cultural significance to the Town.

Summary:

The Bancroft Castle is a well-known, much visited and much loved piece of Groton's history that is deteriorating and is in danger of eventual loss. Assessing the condition of the remains and

developing a preservation plan is a necessary first step in helping to ensure that this asset is preserved for the enjoyment of the public for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted:

Aubrey Theall, Chair, Groton Historical Commission
aubreytheall@hotmail.com

Joshua Vollmar, Groton Historical Commission
joshua.vollmar99@gmail.com

December 15, 2023

The Groton Community Preservation Committee
Groton Town Hall
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

Attn: Preservation Committee

I am writing this letter in support of the proposal to use CPA funds to repair the "Bancroft Castle" at the top of Gibbet Hill. It's hard to imagine that it's been over 20 years since the Town of Groton, The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Webber Family came together to protect Gibbet Hill, Angus Hill and Brooks Orchard. Looking back, the work we did was more successful than I ever imagined. Over 500 acres was protected from development, preserving the open space; trails were created throughout the properties, giving the public access to the land and views many had not seen before; and the Gibbet Hill Grill was created providing the Town with a local gathering spot for many and a place of employment for others. It has been a privilege to be the stewards of this land for all these years and we are proud to have participated in the preservation of this land for the public enjoyment.

Over the years we have seen a steady increase in visitors to the trails and the park at the top of Gibbet Hill. During the pandemic traffic jumped significantly and it hasn't slowed down, especially during the fall foliage season. We have even heard stories of people travelling from as far away as New Jersey! The Castle has always been one of the highlights of the experience for visitors. Built in 1906 as a hunting lodge, most of the structure burned down in a Fireworks accident in 1930. Only the stone foundation and turret remain, and as one could imagine, almost 100 years after the fire, repairs are needed to protect this beloved structure for future generations to enjoy.

The Webber family is in full support of this effort and, if approved, will make a financial contribution to the project.

Sincerely,

Josh Webber
On behalf of the Webber Family



January 2, 2024

Groton Community Preservation Committee,

On behalf of the Groton Historical Society Board of Directors I respectfully submit this letter confirming our full support to the Groton Historical Commission for their grant application for a stabilization study for Groton's Bancroft Castle.

The structure is an important and frequently visited historic landmark on Gibbet Hill in Groton and a stabilization study is a critical first step in assuring that it is properly preserved for future generations.

The Groton Historical Society enthusiastically supports this grant application to initiate the process of stabilizing Bancroft Castle. We applaud the Historical Commission for their stewardship of this significant historic structure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Richard Chilcoat'.

Richard Chilcoat
President



Groton Conservation Commission
Groton Town Hall
Groton, MA 01450

Members of the CPC-

I'm writing in regards to the Groton Historical Commission's current application for CPA funding. Please accept this letter from the Groton Conservation Commission in support of CPC application for FY2025.

One of the most impressive and recognizable landmarks in the Town of Groton is Bancroft's Castle atop Gibbet Hill. The castle has a rich history dating back to 1904 and is enjoyed today by residents, photographers, bird-watchers, and history enthusiasts across the region. However, the castle is rapidly deteriorating and in need of restoration work to ensure that this historic landmark remains safe for recreation.

The Groton Conservation Commission is pleased to submit this Letter of Support for the Groton Historical Commission in favor of CPA funds to restore Bancroft's Castle and the surrounding site. We believe that restoration of Bancroft's Castle is a worthwhile and necessary investment of CPA funds, which will ultimately result in the preservation of a historic landmark for the Town of Groton for generations.

The commission unanimously supports the allocation of CPA funds to the Historical Commission for FY2025. This is clearly a worthwhile investment of CPA funds.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,

Eileen McHugh
Chair
Groton Conservation Commission